Visual Narratives for Visiting the Wattis
Drum Listens to Heart Part I: Sep 1 - Oct 15

We are going to the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts in San Francisco. The Wattis shows all kinds of artworks like paintings, sculptures, videos, and installation art. All the artworks were made by artists who are alive now or were alive in the past 50 years.

The Wattis is located on a quiet street in a mixed industrial and residential neighborhood: this means that people live in this neighborhood and work and make things here too. There is a highway overpass near the art gallery where the cars go really fast. Sometimes, you can hear those cars even inside the art gallery.
There is often construction around the Wattis, which means you might hear a big “BOOM” every now and then, or the sound of drilling.

We have to put on our masks when we get to the Wattis!

We will see two big glass doors when we first arrive at the Wattis. When we open the doors, there will be a room on the left with a red laser beam and a room on the right with lots of sculptures that make different sounds. There is a video work and a large installation we cannot see from the
entrance that make splashing and dripping noises. There will be music playing in the back room, which we cannot see from the entrance. Inside the gallery might feel very dark, as the skylights are covered by black fabric.

There will be someone waiting at a desk to greet us when we go inside. They will tell us where the bathrooms are and other important things about the gallery. We might have to wait a few minutes.

To our left is a room with a red laser—don’t look at it directly!
To go to the bathrooms, we will have to go to the back of the gallery through a doorway. This room is much darker than the rooms we were in earlier.
There is a sign that will tell us where the bathrooms are.

There will be a hallway where the lights are motion activated. The lights will come on when we get close to the bathroom. It may take a minute for the lights to come on. There is also a place to fill up our water bottles here.
We can look at a brochure to tell us more about the art gallery. The brochure will tell us about the artists and why their artwork is at the gallery for this show. We can also read more about the exhibition and what some of the major themes are.

The gallery is divided into four rooms: we can walk through the rooms however we like, but the Wattis suggests we start by looking at art in the room with the front desk when we first come in.

The first room has sculptures and prints by lots of artists. Some of the sculptures light up and move. They look really fun, but we can’t touch them. One artwork has a skeleton—he’s very friendly and not a scary skeleton!
The second room is very dark, so we must watch where we step. The floor is covered in wooden panels on top of the concrete. There is yarn hanging from the ceilings: it might brush over our heads or shoulders, but we cannot pull on it. There are crates on the ground and barrels full of water—carefully, so we don’t knock them over!

The third room has lots of sculptures and two video pieces. We can ring the bells by reaching inside the bell and moving the handle against it. It’s heavy. There is also broken glass in this room, so it is extra important we watch our step and do not touch that sculpture.
The fourth room has a red laser that bounces up and down on a black sweatshirt. We can look at the laser on the sweatshirt, but we should not look at the contraption that shines the laser—it is very bright! If we accidentally look at the laser, it may take some time for our eyes to go back to normal, but we will be ok.
Sometimes, a group of students will come to the art gallery. That means the gallery will be full of people. It can be noisy when someone is giving a tour to a group of people. For a break, we can step outside onto the street.
The Wattis Bar is in the back of the gallery. To enter, we will go through a dimly lit doorway and turn to the right. We will hear music coming from this room.
We will have to turn the corner to go into the bar. The bar is dimly lit compared. There are no windows. There will be different kinds of lights overhead, and lots of records on the walls we can listen to or books we can look at.

The bar has a table where you can sit and do some activities. There are stools at the bar where you can sit or two wooden benches in the corner of the room. There are lots of books in this room. We can pick up and touch the books but cannot take them home. We can listen to the records by using headphones.
When we are ready to leave, we can go to the doors we came through. We will push on the handles and be back on the sidewalk.

I hope we can go to the Wattis again and see more art!